## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 978 By West

A RESOLUTION to recognize Reverend Jerry Sutton upon the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his installment as pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those venerable members of the clergy, who, through their great capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, have enriched the lives of the people of their respective communities and who have distinguished themselves as religious leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jerry Sutton is one such estimable person who has served with distinction for twenty years as pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville; his life and ministry affirm his commitment to the principles of faith, perseverance, and hard work; and

WHEREAS, born in Mobile, Alabama, Jerry Sutton received his bachelor's degree from the University of South Alabama in 1975, and his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in 1978 and 1982, respectively; and

WHEREAS, renowned as a religious leader of the greatest ability, Reverend Sutton is known for his unabashed conservative approach to preaching. When he first came to Nashville he was one of a very few conservative pastors, but he says that twenty years later, most Southern Baptist pastors are conservative, which ideology demands an unchanging message within flexible methodology; changing with the times is part of his success, according to Reverend Sutton; and

WHEREAS, Sam Mallory, the minister of pastoral care at Two Rivers Baptist Church, was on the search committee that hired Reverend Sutton twenty years ago; he says, "Brother Jerry speaks straight out of the Word. It's not always popular, but being faithful doesn't always mean being healthy and wealthy."; and

WHEREAS, while speaking, Reverend Sutton is in his element; he travels often for speaking engagements, and a typical work week for him is estimated at 70 hours; and

WHEREAS, throughout his exemplary tenure with Two Rivers Baptist Church, Reverend Sutton has distinguished himself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and an exceptional asset to his community and the church; he led a \$12 million building campaign in 1992 that included the construction of a 3,300-seat worship center and education space and the acquisition of nearly twenty acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Sutton is blessed with a great and loving heart for God's work and a magnetic personality; he conceptualized and organized the contemporary and *eleVen:01*] service, the church's nontraditional service at which "tee-shirts and rock-n-roll are just fine;" he has also authored *The Baptist Reformation* and *The Way Back Home*; and

WHEREAS, Two Rivers Baptist Church has benefited from Reverend Sutton's wisdom and love in innumerable ways for the past twenty years; he has seen church giving grow from \$2 million to about \$5 million and has baptized approximately 3,000 people; and

WHEREAS, he has also been elected first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention for 2005-2006; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Sutton is strongly committed to the highest ideals of family values; he is most grateful for the tremendous love and companionship that he shares with his beloved wife, Fern, to whom he has been married for thirty-two years; and

WHEREAS; Reverend and Mrs. Sutton are the proud parents of two daughters: Ashli Elizabeth, a second-year student at Liberty School of Law in Lynchburg, Virginia; and Hilary Lynn, a junior at Liberty; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Sutton's outstanding career as a dynamic and compassionate religious leader and an active civic leader is directly attributable to his reliance on God's grace, his dedication to the time-honored values of hard work and common sense, and his uncommon ability to relate to people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary pastoral celebration weekend included a special dinner at Gaylord Springs Golf Links; a Sunday morning service at Two Rivers Baptist Church conducted by the Reverend Fred Wolfe, who is Pastor Sutton's childhood pastor and mentor;

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and a Sunday evening service preached by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, Chancellor of Liberty University; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Reverend Sutton has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his colleagues and his flock alike; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Reverend Jerry Sutton our heartfelt congratulations upon his celebration of twenty years as pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church, wish him every continued success in his future endeavors, and thank him for his unwavering dedication to God, the members of Two Rivers Baptist Church, and his community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

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